

UFO report tells of jet pilots' close encounter

FLYING saucer spotters who gathered yesterday in a London hotel for the first national symposium on unidentified flying objects were treated to a remarkable report from the United States' government.

The 300-page document released by the Federal Aviation Authority concerned an incident involving a Japan Air Lines 747 flying over Alaska last November.

The report concerns JAL flight 1628, and includes testimony from Kenju Terauchi, the flight captain, who described in vivid detail an experience he and his crew shared as they flew 35,000ft above the Alaskan tundra en route from Iceland to Anchorage.

Terauchi said they suddenly saw two bright lights moving sporadically 600 metres below them and to their left, "like two bear cubs playing".

The crew had just confirmed with Anchorage traffic control that no civil or military flights were in the area when interference made communications virtually impossible. This was followed by a brilliant light shining directly into the cockpit. In front of them, said Terauchi, was the discernible outline of a craft.

"Its shape was a square, flying 500-1,000ft in front of us, very slightly higher in altitude," Terauchi told inspectors. "Its size was about the same as the body of a DC-8 jet and with numerous exhaust pipes. The firing of the exhaust jets varied, perhaps to maintain balance."

From this, he went on, several tiny bright objects detached themselves and flew in formation parallel to the

jumbo jet. The crew found they were able to use their VHF transmitter to Anchorage air traffic control which reported it was unable to find anything on radar.

When the 747 landed, Terauchi and the crew were separately debriefed and, according to the FAA report, their stories tallied. The federal official responsible, Franklin Cunningham, said the flight crew, who were tested for drugs and alcohol, were "professional and rational" when interviewed.

One man who has no reason to doubt the finding is Lord Hill-Norton, the former British chief of defence staff, who believes that governments are deliberately concealing information about UFOs: "The plain fact is that there are far too many reports from highly-reputable people about sightings of UFOs; people such as policemen, airline pilots and doctors, whose testimony on any other subject would be accepted without question."

Hill-Norton also believes there is a strong defence interest at stake: "It is intellectually unacceptable to claim that there is no defence interest in the face of the world-wide evidence."

The term "flying saucer" was coined by journalists in 1947 when Kenneth Arnold, an Idaho businessman, described the movement of nine disc-shaped objects spotted from the window of his light aircraft. His sightings started a saucer-spotting frenzy that even the most committed believers would accept produced as many cunning, mocked-up shots as "genuine" snaps of passing Martians.

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